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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Thursday, March 16, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "ESSENTIALS FOR GOOD LIGHTING," Information from the Bureaus of Agricultural Engineering and Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Have you ever been on a camping trip? A real camping trip? What did you do after nightfall? Probably you sat round the camp fire and sang or told stories. The campfire furnished the only light. And it was enough for your purpose.

If you live in a city or town or on a farm supplied with electric light, what do you do when the current is temporarily cut off? Doubtless you grope about until you find some candles or, on a farm, maybe a lantern or a lamp. And after lighting you discover that they don't give enough light for anything you want to do -- read, sew, write a letter, or play games. You are glad when the current comes on again, I'm sure.

Yes, we have come to depend on artificial light.

But unfortunately many people do not always have as good light as they might have, even today. That's true, whether they get their light from electricity, kerosene or other lamps, or just from daylight. Yes, I mean daylight -- when folks obscure it with heavy draperies or shades pulled down for fear they'll fade the carpet.

The Bureau of Agricultural Engineering and the Bureau of Home Economics in the United States Department of Agriculture have been making a study of rural lighting needs in cooperation with members of the "I.E.S." (Illuminating Engineers' Society) and a number of other lighting and engineering specialists. These authorities say that the principles of good lighting are the same whatever the source of light. While they are given frequently in terms of electric light they can be applied to other types of lighting systems.

It hardly seems necessary to explain why good light is so important, but those same persons who have poor light may not realize certain results of it. For one thing, if light is inadequate, the eyes endeavor as long as possible to adapt themselves to the situation. That causes eyestrain. Good light with freedom from eyestrain is important to general health, as well as to the comfort and efficiency of the worker. Eyestrain may be causing nervousness, physical weariness, and other bodily derangement. The eyes of growing children are still in a formative stage. Eyestrain in children may do permanent injury.

Again, good light helps in keeping a house clean. Dark corners tend to collect dust. And many a home accident might be prevented if the stairs or pathways through the house were adequately lighted.



The first requisite of good lighting, the engineers say, is that there shall be a sufficient amount of light, directed on an object or surface to make it clearly visible. That sounds pretty simple. And there is a way of determining what is a sufficient amount of light and whether or not the source of light supplies it. We measure light by a unit called a "footcandle", using an instrument called a light meter. Light meters are too expensive at the present time to be bought for individual homes, but in most places the local power or electric company has one, or the home demonstration agent. Through these agencies it may be possible to have a light meter brought to your home to test the adequacy of your present lighting. Then you'll be in a position to plan for new or improved lighting; for the places that need it most. Near Father's reading chair, for example, or at the desk where the children study, or in the corner where Mother ~~says~~.

In addition to this specialized lighting most of the rooms of the house also need general lighting. How bright this general lighting needs to be is different in different rooms. In the living room the general lighting should be bright enough so there won't be too strong contrast to bother those who want to sit and talk.

In the kitchen or laundry general lighting should be bright enough for a person to work by comfortably. At centers where there's close work to do there should be local lighting.

Bedrooms need moderately bright general lighting in addition to special lights at the dressing table or for reading in bed. In the dining room, light should be focused on the table, but so arranged that there will not be glare.

Hallways and stairs don't need so much light as the main rooms of the house. But they should be light enough so that you can see to walk. And as a safety measure--stairs and halls that are in frequent use should have a small light left on practically all the time.

Basements and porches need about the same amount of light as hallways. It's a good idea to have such control of porch and stair lights that they can be turned on as needed. That is--to have two switches controlling each light--one at the head and one at the foot of the stairs--one at the house door of the porch and one at the outside door. That way you can turn them on or off wherever you happen to be.

Windows control the amount of natural light admitted to the house. The upper part of the window is more important than the lower, because light entering through it will penetrate further into the room than light entering through the lower sash. It is usually considered that under average conditions in the United States window area equal to 15-20 percent of the floor area will give good natural lighting. That is, of course, if the windows are well spaced and not shaded by porches, trees, vines, or other obstructions.

During daylight hours, the engineers think, windows where good light is needed should be kept free of heavy curtains, draperies, or shades. Even thin glass curtains or screens cut down light to a surprising extent. (And- let me whisper it- so do dirty panes!) Curtains can generally be arranged to pull back when not needed for privacy or to soften intense sunlight. Venetian blinds are good because they can be adjusted.

These are just a few of the things the lighting specialists of the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering and Home Economics say on the subject.

